

toward the Girl Scout Gold Award in the late spring of 1998. They completed their project in the areas of leadership and community service by developing their communication skills and then working with the hearing impaired community. They used these skills to reach out to various parts of the community. They used their skills to plan and implement a deaf community carnival for people with hearing impairments and their families, as well as students who were learning sign language. I believe they should receive the public recognition due them for this significant service to their community and their country.

CPSC ON THE FAST TRACK

HON. EDWARD J. MARKEY

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 17, 1998

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to call to the attention of my colleagues the outstanding work being done by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC). The Commission has put into effect an innovative program, under which it works cooperatively with industry to get hazardous products off store shelves within days, instead of the weeks and months that it traditionally takes to negotiate a recall. Everyone wins under this new system—especially the consumer, who is protected from possible injury.

This Fast-Track Product Recall Program was recently honored with a 1998 Innovations in American Government Award. The CPSC

was one of three federal government winners of the \$100,000 award this year. These awards are funded by the Ford Foundation, and administered by the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University in partnership with the Council for Excellence in Government.

The CPSC's award-winning program was highlighted in the December 1998 edition of Government Executive magazine, and I would like to submit this article for the RECORD.

[From Government Executive, Dec. 1998]

A FAST TRACK TO CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY—QUICK RECALL OF FAULTY PRODUCTS SERVES EVERYONE

FAST-TRACK PRODUCT RECALL PROGRAM U.S. CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY COMMISSION

When a consumer product could hurt or even kill somebody, the traditional regulatory response is understandable: to find fault and then decide how to punish the manufacturer. But there's a new attitude at the Consumer Product Safety Commission—charged with monitoring consumer product safety nationwide: When a product has the potential to hurt or even kill somebody, the preferred course is to work with the manufacturer to get that product off the market fast. That is the aim of the Fast-Track Product Recall Program, launched as a six-month pilot in July 1995.

With 21,400 deaths and 29 million injuries annually due to faulty consumer products, the issue of unsafe products is not a small one. And the size of the problem only compounded the frustration of CPSC staff over how long it traditionally took to implement a recall—time delays exacerbated by the frequently adversarial nature of the process.

And so staff in the Commission's Office of Compliance decided to try a new tack. In dis-

cussions with companies, staff learned two things: The recall process itself—which frequently called for lengthy testing and investigations—sometimes got in the way of rapid recall. More serious, though, was that in initiating a recall, the Commission would in every case make a "preliminary determination" of a product defect in order to justify the recall. Because such "PDs," as they were called, implied guilt, companies afraid of liability suits frequently fought them as a matter of course. That, too, only served to drag out the process.

To avoid all that, the Commission and manufacturers negotiated a trade. If companies would volunteer for fast-track, the Commission would sidestep much of the process involved in initiating a recall, including the preliminary determination.

The new avenue for recalls caught on quickly. Since the program was launched (it became permanent in March 1997), nearly half of all recalls are fast-tracked. In 1996, 103 fast-track recalls were initiated within an average of 10 days; in 1997, 105 recalls were initiated within an average of 17 days. While a week may seem like a long time for some defective product to stay on the shelves, it is a vast improvement over the weeks or months that it takes to initiate a recall under the traditional system.

Not only is the new system faster, it also appears to be more effective. The percentage of products returned by consumers for repair or replacement has averaged over 60 percent for fast-track, compared with 30 percent under the traditional process. And the new system is very cost-effective. Although nearly half of all recalls are now fast-tracked, they account for only 10 percent of the Commission's \$16.5 million compliance budget.